

### ‘Mary’s Way of the Cross’ – the love of a suffering Mother

Mary, the mother of God, felt the pangs of suffering while watching her son be crucified for all of humanity. She is here to offer consolation and comfort in suffering as our spiritual mother, especially this Lenten season.

Our Lady of Sorrows is made relatable and the love of a mother is shown through “Mary’s Way of the Cross,” the Stations of the Cross through Mary’s perspective, written by Richard Furey. The service was scheduled for the Tuesdays of Lent, but has been cancelled because of the pandemic.

Christine Earl, a parishioner at St. Ignatius and former parishioner of St. Margaret, Reading, brought the women-run event to the pastor, Father Tom Bortz. He gave the OK a few years ago, and it’s been growing ever since.

Two altar servers with candles process in to the music of “Immaculate Mary” with Mary, portrayed by Roberta Lowther of Bern Township, and the 14 female readers. After reflection in front of the altar, the rotation of the stations begins. The readers rotate every week, as there is a waiting list of eager women.

“I normally do stations as part of my Lenten journey, and when I was asked to



read, it was like God tapping me on the shoulder to take that next step,” said parishioner Christine Schifalacqua of Sinking Spring. “I’m a mother, and it speaks to my heart.”

The pews were lined with about 50 men and women to go through the stations from Mary’s eyes. It highlighted Mary’s willingness to suffer for the good of the Kingdom, even though it meant watching her only son die. Through this suffering, however, Mary shows that she can relate to our pain and comfort those who approach the foot of the cross.

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*Clockwise from left: Mary is portrayed by Roberta Lowther of Bern Township, with her grandchildren Samantha and*

*Christopher Lowther under the stations. Christine Schifalacqua reads one of the stations. Kate Brubaker reads the 14th station as Mary (Roberta Lowther) and the altar servers process around the church.*

*(Photos by Jillian Clemente)*

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**MOTHER**

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From her perspective, one station had her say, "I knew he was right, so I followed." This highlights her incredible faith in God.

"It shows how strong Mary was through all of this," said Schifalacqua. "She had such faith to endure the pain and knew it was going to be OK in the end."

Mary reflected on one station, "I knew this had to be, so I stood by silently and prayed." She shows us through trust in her son and pure humility how to submit to the will of God through the suffering, not in spite of it. In this aspect, Kate Brubaker, a parishioner and reader, connected most through her own motherhood.

"Every parent has had a child be sick and there's nothing you can do about it; [parents] connect more easily with Mary," said Brubaker of Spring Township. "We understand her more. She's human and most of us are moms.

"It's a different perspective, but one we see better."

Another parent reflected

on enduring suffering in the waiting of God's promises and the beauty of a mother's love.

"Mary developed this strength," said parent and grandparent Kurt Lowther of Bern Township and husband of Roberta. "It's not about her and her son – it's for everyone."

Brubaker started to play Mary a few years ago, and her grandchildren wanted to assist in Mary's stations.

Samantha Lowther, 13, and Christopher Lowther, 11, became altar servers at St. Ignatius and love helping out the church through serving Masses and "Mary's Way."

Christopher enjoys attending each week. He said, "I get to hang out with Nana and God for, like, an hour."

The service closes with a recorded rendition of "Mary, Did You Know" for meditation on the fact that yes, Mary did know, and still followed God's will through the suffering as our Blessed Mother.

> *By Jillian Clemente*